

In the Claims:

- 1.(currently amended) A method of softening water, wherein hard water is contacted with a container and-containing one or more water-softening agents able to bind calcium ions, the container having an enclosing wall wherein at least part, preferably all, of the wall is permeable to the water and to components dissolved therein characterised in that the product is stored and removed prior to use from packaging having a moisture vapour transmission rate of less than 30g/m²/day.
- 2.(currently amended) A method according to as claimed in claim 2 wherein at least one water-softening agent is substantially water-insoluble.
- 3.(currently amended) A method according to as claimed in claim 1 or 2 wherein the method is a method used in a ware washing machine.
- 4.(currently amended) A method according to claim 1 as claimed in any claims from 1 to 3 wherein at least one water-softening agent is a cation exchange resin.
- 5.(currently amended) A water-softening product comprising a container containing one or more water-softening agents, the container having an enclosing wall which in at least part, preferably all, of the wall is permeable to water and to components dissolved in, the container being held within a package having a moisture vapour transmission rate of less than 30g/m²/day.
- 6.(original) A water-softening product as claimed in claim 5 wherein at least one water-softening agent is water-soluble.

7.(currently amended) A water-softening product according to as claimed in claim 5 or 6 wherein the container is a flat container, preferably a sachet.

8.(currently amended) A water-softening product according to as claimed in claim 7 wherein the container wall comprises a sheet.

9.(currently amended) A water-softening product according to as claimed in claim 8 wherein the sheet is a woven or non-woven material.

10.(currently amended) A water-softening product according to claim 5 according to claim 5 as claimed in any claim from 5 to 9 wherein the packaging is formed from a sheet of flexible material.

11.(currently amended) A method of providing improved cleaning in a clothes washing machine, wherein a product containing a substantially water-insoluble water softening agent, having a wall permeable to water and to metal ions therein but impermeable to the agent is located in the machine such that hard water flows through the product, thereby effecting the softening of the water in the machine characterised in that the product is stored and removed prior to use from packaging having a MVTR of less than 30g/m²/day.

12.(new) A water-softening product according to claim 5 wherein the container is a sachet.